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Dis-appointments

For a long time it has been apparent that Vice Admiral Raborn's appointment to head the Central Intelligence Agency was a mistake. The President rectified this last week when he announced the Admiral's resignation and his replacement by his deputy, Mr Richard Helms. Many people thought that Mr Helms, who has been at the CIA since it was formed in 1947, should have had the job in the first place. Their belief has been fortified during the past year. Morale slumped at the CIA under a man with no experience of this sort of work and Admiral Raborn's touch with Congress, so sure when he was developing the Polaris missile, proved uncertain when he was dealing with matters of intelligence. The past few months have seen a move in the Senate to demand more effective congressional supervision of the CIA, with the Foreign Relations Committee being given the information about its workings now available only to a less critical group. Mr Helms will not only run the CIA but will also oversee the whole intelligence community, including the formidable operations maintained by the State Department and the Department of Defence. The news of his appointment is said to have restored morale at the CIA. Whether it will head off the demand for closer congressional supervision is another matter.

Appeasement seems to be the keynote of two other important changes which were announced at the same time. The President's decision to move Mr Nicholas Johnson to the Federal Communications Commission is of interest less for what Mr Johnson is to do at the FCC than for what he is to be stopped from doing at the Maritime Administration. As its head the brilliant young Mr Johnson has seen it as his job not to cherish the shipping and shipbuilding interests but to stir them up and expose them to the cold air. The ship-owners and the maritime unions are rejoicing openly at his departure, without waiting to see whom the President chooses as Mr Johnson's successor.

At the FCC the big news, however, is not the arrival of the iconoclastic Mr Johnson, but the appointment as chairman of Mr Rosel Hyde, a member of the commission who has been acting chairman. This 66-year-old Republican takes the place left vacant by another gifted and controversial young man, Mr Richard Henry. Big and vital tasks await the FCC in the next few years. The television industry faces a revolution both in economics and techniques as the communications satellites come into their own and as the growth of community antenna television, over which the FCC is engaged in asserting its authority, continues to snowball. But the new chairman is no believer in "big government" nor is he a man to look for a fight; he is expected to treat the commercial interests with too much, rather than too little, consideration.

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